

An Oak coppice in Genk and its weevil fauna (Coleoptera: Curculionidae, Cryptorhynchinae)

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Abstract. Oak coppice can be considered a vegetation type providing a long-term continuity in living conditions. By sieving, a soil sample was taken from one specific Oak coppice. This sample was analysed on the presence of Coleoptera relic species of the genus *Acalles*.

Samenvatting. Een hakhoutstoof te Genk en zijn snuitkeverfauna (Coleoptera: Curculionidae, Cryptorhynchinae)

Hakhoutstoven vormen een relictvegetatie. Ze bieden een mate van continuïteit in leefomstandigheden over een langere tijdperiode. Met een zeefstaalname werd op één specifieke locatie nagegaan of deze hakhoutstoof ook relict snuitkeversoorten uit het genus *Acalles* bevatte.

Résumé. Un taillis de chêne à Genk et son faune de curculionides (Coleoptera: Curculionidae, Cryptorhynchinae)

Les taillis de chênes ont connues une exploitation constante depuis des siècles. Cette continuité végétale à du créer un biotope stable. A l'aide d'un tamis un échantillon de substrat d'une spécifique taillis de chênes à été enlevé pour chercher la présence des espèces coléoptères du genre *Acalles*.

Key words: Coleoptera – Curculionidae – Cryptorhynchinae - *Acalles ptinoides* – coppice - small landscape elements – faunistics – Belgium – Flanders – Limburg.

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Genk has some sites of old Oak coppices. Most of these locations have known coppice practice until the early 20th century. One such concentration of coppices can be found at the Genk locality of Zwartberg (Belgium, province of Limburg). The coppices are situated within a declining heather on sandy soil, next to neglected pine plantations. The most impressive coppice stool (*Quercus petraea* – sessile oak) has been acknowledged as one of the most important autochthonous oak sites in Flanders (evaluated as certainly autochthonous) (Vander Mijnsbrugge *et al.* 2003: 210).

Discussion

The Oak coppice in question (FS7754, Zwartberg, Klaverberg), due to its autochthonous status, can be considered as a relic or indicator of a former natural woody vegetation (Vander Mijnsbrugge *et al.* 2003: 216). The cutting cycle in coppice favours growth of sprouts and the forming of 'brushes', knobs with an entanglement of fresh and dead twigs. The growing of 'brushes' and sprouts creates an ideal environment for the development of *Acalles* species. The presumption that a long-term continuity in vegetation should harbour weevil relic-species that are favoured by the silvicultural coppice practice, was put to the test.

A soil sample was taken on 14.viii.2005. Conditions for soil-sampling were not ideal. The Oak coppice stands prone to weathering by wind and rain. Possibly since the early 20th century, the coppice is no longer in cultivation. At the trunk level, few sprouts or branches are present. Soil erosion slowly erodes

the top surface of the coppice mound. By brushing low branches and the soil around the trunks, some substrate was collected. The soil sample was processed during one week by method of an extraction funnel.



Fig. 1. Sampled sessile oak coppice (*Quercus petraea*) at Klaverberg (Genk, Zwartberg, FS7754).

Further investigation

After extraction, two specimen of *Acalles ptinoides* (Marsham, 1802) were retrieved. The find of *Acalles ptinoides* confirms the presumed presence of this species for the locality. Regardless of the fact that *A. ptinoides* is our most frequent species of the genus *Acalles*, it still indicates a continuity in living conditions at that specific site. Despite the unfavourable condition of the coppice mound, a population manages to develop. The sampled coppice is not the sole coppice within the locality. Many surround the sampled site. In contrast, most of these coppices are less exposed to the natural elements. They are largely covered by a layer of humus and leaf litter in which specimen can shelter. More shoots are present. Further investigation should point out if *A. ptinoides* is locally thriving and whether other species of Cryptorhynchinae are present.

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